

Asbury Residence

What are the unique and outstanding functional, environmental, and aesthetic features of this project?

The head scratching question on this project came from the client at the initial meeting: what form does a house take that is both contemporary in spirit yet reflective of traditional Mediterranean design concepts?

Key to the design was the recognition that what has developed as a “Modern Mediterranean” style in this country is neither all that modern nor does it accurately reflect the diversity of building stock from this vast region; for the most part the term has come to describe an unrestrained pastiche of clichéd, predictable elements. Objectively looking back into history helped define a fresh direction for the project.

Italian Rationalism of the 1920s, itself a derivation of Renaissance concepts, with an emphasis on reason and logic, became a launch pad. The house is an amalgamation of simple, easy to identify volumes. Therefore, the stately front façade contextually establishes the house (within Evanston’s Ridge Historic District). Detailing was streamlined and minimized. The interior’s open plan wraps around a central courtyard and is a reflection of a contemporary, casual lifestyle. Orienting spaces toward the courtyard also serves to buffer busy street noise. Extra height spaces invited the addition of over-scaled windows to bring in sunlight without compromising privacy.

How does the design respond to the surrounding physical and cultural context and environmental constraints?

The house sits within easy walking distance of Evanston’s urban center and various public transit lines, enabling a degree of connectivity which is rare in a suburban setting. The site once housed a warehouse and effectively was a brownfield that required extensive soil remediation before construction could begin. Thick stucco walls and foam insulation help to minimize energy costs in addition to attenuating noise from the busy thoroughfare on which the site fronts. Now home to ten month old child, the house was built under strict V.O.C. limits. Reclaimed lumber, ornamental ironwork salvaged from structures slated for demolition, and shingles made out of recycled tires are key elements in the material palette. Large windows provide abundant interior light but are tinted to minimize heat gain. Suspended razor thin LED strips discretely illuminate the locally sourced wood ceiling in the great room.

Describe uses of materials and building systems that created an environmentally and contextually responsive design.

The use of large oversized windows in the house are a central feature. The use of triple glazed glass helped to minimize energy consumption year round. A light solar tint on the most exposed windows further reduces heat loading. Even with the large number of windows and exterior walls, the house still exceeded state set energy conservation standards by 30%. The roof of the house is clad in a tile made from reconstituted rubber and reused or salvaged materials appear throughout the house. The house itself is relatively compact for its neighborhood.

The key goal of the house was to develop a design that was reflective of its historic neighborhood while also being clearly of its age. The overall volume of the house is fairly traditional but subtle gestures clearly communicate that the house is of the 21st century. As one approaches the house

from the street, the roof gables disappear behind a project modern, cubic volume which is punched by an asymmetric layout of windows and door. Details too, simplified to their very essence, establish a progressive vocabulary.

Project Details

New Construction: Yes
Year Completed: 2015
Building Type: Residential
City: Evanston
State: Illinois
Country: USA
Foundation: Poured-in-place concrete
Superstructure / Framing System: Wood framed
Exterior Enclosure: Stucco
Roof Material: Slate
Square Footage: 2,965 sqft
Number of Rooms: 3 bedrooms / 3.5 bathrooms
Mechanical: Trane
Site Area: 0.17 acres

Project Team

Architect:

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Contractor:

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